proceedings. The weight to be given evidence shall be determined by its reliability and probative value. In all hearings the testimony of witnesses shall be taken orally, except as otherwise provided by these rules or by the Administrative Law Judge. Parties, however, shall have the right to cross-examine a witness who appears at the hearing, provided that such cross examination is not unduly repetitious.

(b) *Report of a committee of the National Academy of Sciences.* If questions have been submitted to a committee designated by the National Academy pursuant to §164.50(e), the report of the committee, other material that may be required by the Administrator and a list of witnesses and evidence relied upon shall be received into evidence and made part of the record of the hearing. Objections to the report may also be made part of the record and go to the weight of its evidentiary value.

(c) *Objections.* If a party objects to the admission or rejection of any evidence or the limitation of the scope of any examination or cross-examination, he shall state briefly the grounds for such objection. The transcript shall include any argument or debate thereon, unless the Administrative Law Judge, with the consent of all parties, orders that such argument not be transcribed. The ruling and the reasons given therefor by the Administrative Law Judge on any objection shall be a part of the transcript. An automatic exception to that ruling will follow.

(d) *Exhibits.* Except where the Administrative Law Judge finds that the furnishing of copies is impracticable, a copy of each exhibit filed with the Administrative Law Judge shall be furnished to each other party. A true copy of an exhibit may, in the discretion of the Administrative Law Judge, be substituted for the original.

(e) *Official Notice.* Official notice may be taken of Agency proceedings, any matter judicially noticed in the Federal courts, and of other facts within the specialized knowledge and experience of the Agency. Any active party shall be given adequate opportunity to show that such facts are erroneously noticed by presenting evidence to the contrary.

(f) *Offer of proof.* Whenever evidence is deemed inadmissible, the party offering such evidence may make an offer of proof, which shall be included in the transcript. The offer of proof for excluded oral testimony shall consist of a brief statement describing the nature of the evidence excluded. If the evidence consists of a document or exhibit, it shall be inserted in the record in total. In the event the Environmental Appeals Board decides that the Administrative Law Judge's ruling in excluding the evidence was erroneous and prejudicial, the hearings may be reopened to permit the taking of such evidence, or where appropriate, the Environmental Appeals Board may evaluate the evidence and proceed to a final decision.

(g) *Verified statements.* With the approval of the Administrative Law Judge, a witness may insert into the record, as his testimony, statements of fact or opinion prepared by him or written answers to interrogatories of counsel, or may submit as an exhibit his prepared statement, provided that such statements or answers must not include legal argument. Before any such statement or answer is read or admitted into evidence the witness shall deliver to the Administrative Law Judge, the reporter, and opposing counsel a copy of such. The admissibility of the evidence contained in such statement shall be subject to the same rules as if such testimony were produced in the usual manner and the witness shall be subject to oral cross-examination on the contents of such statements. Approval for such a procedure may be denied when it appears to the Administrative Law Judge that the memory or the demeanor of the witness is of importance.

[38 FR 19371, July 20, 1973, as amended at 40 FR 25815, June 19, 1975; 57 FR 5343, Feb. 13, 1992]

§164.82 Transcripts.

(a) *Filing and certification.* Hearings shall be stenographically reported, transcribed and made available to the public as required by statute or Agency regulations. As soon as practicable after the taking of the last evidence, the Administrative Law Judge shall certify (1) that the original transcript

is a true transcript of the testimony offered or received at the hearing, except in such particulars as he shall specify and (2) that the exhibits accompanying the transcript are all the exhibits introduced at the hearing, with such exceptions as he shall specify. A copy of such certificate shall be attached to each of the copies of the transcript.

(b) [Reserved]

INITIAL OR ACCELERATED DECISION

§ 164.90 Initial decision.

(a) *Proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and order.* Within 20 days after the last evidence is taken in a hearing, each party may file with the hearing clerk proposed orders, findings of fact, and conclusions of law based solely on the record, and a brief in support thereof. Within 10 days thereafter, each party may file a reply brief. The Administrative Law Judge may, in his discretion, extend the total time period for filing any proposed findings, conclusions, orders or briefs for an additional 30 days. In such instances, briefs and replies shall be due at such time as the Administrative Law Judge may fix by order. The hearing shall be deemed closed at the conclusion of the briefing period.

(b) *Initial decision.* The Administrative Law Judge, within 25 days after the close of the hearing, shall evaluate the record before him, and prepare and file his initial decision with the hearing clerk. A copy of the initial decision shall be served upon each of the parties, and the hearing clerk shall immediately transmit a copy to the Environmental Appeals Board. The initial decision shall become the decision of the Environmental Appeals Board without further proceedings unless an appeal is taken from it or the Environmental Appeals Board orders review of it, pursuant to § 164.101.

[38 FR 19371, July 20, 1973, as amended at 57 FR 5343, Feb. 13, 1992]

§ 164.91 Accelerated decision.

(a) *General.* The Administrative Law Judge, in his discretion, may at any time render an accelerated decision in favor of Respondent as to all or any portion of the proceeding, including dismissal without further hearing or upon such limited additional evidence such as affidavits as he may receive, under any of the following conditions:

(1) Untimely or insufficient objections filed pursuant to § 164.20;

(2) Failure to comply with discovery orders;

(3) Failure to comply with prehearing orders;

(4) Failure to appear or to proceed at prehearing conferences;

(5) Failure to appear at the hearing;

(6) Failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or direct or collateral estoppel.

(7) Theat there is no genuine issue of any material fact and that the respondent is entitled to judgment as a matter of law; or

(8) Such other and further reasons as are just.

(b) *Effect.* A decision rendered under this section shall have the same force and effect as an initial decision entered under § 164.90.

APPEALS

§ 164.100 Appeals from or review of interlocutory orders or rulings.

Except as provided herein, appeals as a matter of right shall lie to the Environmental Appeals Board only from an initial or accelerated decision of the Administrative Law Judge. Appeals from other orders or rulings shall, except as provided in this section, lie only if the Administrative Law Judge certifies such orders or rulings for appeal, or otherwise as provided. The Administrative Law Judge may certify an order or ruling for appeal to the Environmental Appeals Board when: (a) The order or ruling involves an important question of law or policy about which there is substantial ground for difference of opinion; and (b) either (1) an immediate appeal from the order and ruling will materially advance the ultimate termination of the proceeding or (2) review after the final judgment is issued will be inadequate or ineffective. The Administrative Law Judge shall certify orders or rulings for appeal only upon the request of a party. If the Environmental Appeals Board determines that certification was improvidently